

INSTORE

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CATEGORY FOCUS STORE DESIGNERS

Space Masters

PLANNING TO RENOVATE AN EXISTING STORE OR OPEN A NEW LOCATION?

The very *thought* of it can be daunting, but with collaboration and communication with your design team you can almost ensure a successful project, experts say. Debbie Yeager worked with Baker Store Equipment of Cleveland, OH, and an interior designer to achieve the homey look she and her husband wanted in their new store in a strip center in Westlake, OH. They were excited that Baker's offices were nearby. "And we liked the idea of one entity doing it all — from the architectural drawings to the showcases, electrical drawings, lighting, and access to carpets and all that. It was all in-house." Still, most designers are equipped to coordinate projects from afar, as long as designer and client are able to communicate effectively. Meet them and make sure they *get you*, says Ruth Møllergaard of GRID/3 International in New York. "Every jeweler markets products differently. What are you really passionate about in your store? Staff? Merchandise? Image? Function? Price? Do you get the sense that the designer understands this?" —

EILEEN MCLELLAND

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Effective retailing is about storytelling — specifically telling your story. Some store designers are great at creating their own vision. However, what you need is a designer able to grasp who you are, where you want to go and how you want to get there. This basic interpersonal connection is vital to a successful outcome, so it is critical to find people with whom you are completely comfortable. —

Kristopher Kargel, Chippenhook

As you begin to evaluate the candidates, pay particular attention to the designers' questions. A knowledgeable designer will want to gain insight into your operation and goals early in the process in order to avoid disappointment down the line. Your answers will enable a designer to incorporate realistic goals into the plan from inception rather than later in the process. It is far cheaper to change items on paper than after they turn into brick and mortar. —

Gerry Gonda, Baker Store Equipment

Spend time in a comfortable environment talking about your story, dreams and goals. Pay

attention to how well the designer listens. —

Kargel

Make sure that your designer is a creative lighting savant. —

Ruth Møllergaard

Consider whether the designer is flexible enough to adapt to your ideas and is genuinely excited about your project. Review their portfolios, but understand that most talented designers can accommodate the look you're seeking even if you don't see exactly what it is you want in their past designs. —

Stephanie Maxey

A good store designer will know what constitutes industry-specific items such as a bridal gallery, security and traffic patterns. —

Gonda

A good appreciation of jewelry retail and its complexities is important, but I would also pay attention to the designer's non-jewelry work. Those outside influences will help bring new, fresh ideas to your store. —

Kargel

Make sure you're on the same page about the timeframe. Speed can depend on how large the firm

is. Larger design firms can produce multiple facets of the project at one time. —

Maxey

Discuss exactly what services you need — planning, design, lighting, fixture details, exterior design — because this will dictate how the fee is settled. —

Møllergaard

Establish a clear understanding of your total budget and assess past projects in that light. Talk openly. Ask what challenges the firm sees in matching your vision with the overall budget. —

Kargel

Consider how your designer works with the whole team, from architect to contractor, if applicable. Ideally, everyone should be on board from the earliest preconstruction phase. "Everyone's eyes are bigger than their wallets, especially now. As a builder, we certainly prefer to be involved as early as possible in the process before the hammer ever hits the nail, because we can comment on the constructibility, provide input on green elements of store design and offer value-engineering suggestions when designs exceed budgets." —

John Sotir, MacKenzie Keck



1 Jack and Debbie Yeager chose Baker Store Equipment in part because they wanted to work with a company that could do all the work.

2 Budget was an absolute priority at Schwarzschild Jewelers in Richmond, VA, where cabinets are fabricated in plastic laminate rather than wood veneer, says the store's designer Stephanie Maxey.

3 Ruth Møllergaard of Grid/3 International designed the interior layout of Charleston Alexander Diamond Importers and the store's 72 cases.

4 MacKenzie Keck Construction and architecture firm Pompei A.D. recently completed a second U.S. store for India-based jeweler Tanisqa.

CATEGORY VENDORS

ALLSMAN STORE DESIGN CORP.
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GRID/3 INTERNATIONAL, INC.
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